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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE  
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RUEH AR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 1765  
RUEH DS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 1891  
RUEH RL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0476  
RUEH BY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1168  
RUEH DK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 1525  
RUEH KM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 1947  
RUEH NR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 4376  
RUEA IIA/CIA WASHDC  
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK  
RHMF ISS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE  
RHEF DIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEH GV/USMISSION GENEVA 1018  
RHEH AAA/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 000100

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AF/S FOR S. HILL,  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU  
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STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS  
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/06/2018  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [ZI](#)  
SUBJECT: MDC RECONCILIATION FAILS

REF: HARARE 96

Classified By: Amb. James D. McGee for reason 1.4 (d)

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. (C) The anticipated Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) reconciliation collapsed this past weekend over the issue of allocation of constituencies in Bulawayo. MDC president Morgan Tsvangirai blamed Matabeleland leaders in both factions, admitting he was unable to control these regional leaders from his own faction. Tsvangirai's counterpart in the other faction, Arthur Mutambara, claimed he had been flexible in negotiations, and blamed Tsvangirai for failing to exercise leadership. Tsvangirai's secretary general, Tendai Biti, was dismissive of the leadership of both factions; an agreement had failed over only two seats in Bulawayo and people were thinking of themselves rather than the country. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) The Ambassador met separately with Tsvangirai and Mutambara on February 4 in the wake of the failed MDC agreement. Polecon chief met with Biti on February 4.

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Tsvangirai Blames His Matabeleland Members  
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¶3. (C) Tsvangirai said that last week in meetings in South Africa his faction had agreed in principle to reconciliation with the Mutambara faction of the MDC. The devil was in the details, however, and his national council had rejected an agreement with the Mutambara faction because of disagreement over the allocation of seats in Matabeleland. They believed they had more support on the ground than the Mutambara faction and should have at least a fifty-fifty split of

parliamentary seats in Matabeleland. Tsvangirai expressed frustration; this was a Matabeleland problem, members of both factions from Matabeleland were at fault, and he had been unable to rein his people in.

14. (C) Tsvangirai also said the MDC had decided to contest the election and not boycott. In real terms, he thought he and the MDC could win, although he said the ZANU-PF rigging would prevent a recognized vote count in the MDC's favor. Contesting the election, however, would allow exposure of ZANU-PF fraud.

15. (C) While acknowledging a reconciled MDC would be stronger in the elections, Tsvangirai said he was determined to run for president if there was no reconciliation between the factions. At the least, there would be de facto unification; he told us his faction would not run candidates in constituencies now represented by strong Mutambara-faction candidates.

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Mutambara Blames Tsvangirai  
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16. (C) Mutambara's accounting of the failure to achieve reconciliation tracked with Tsvangirai's. He said there had been an initial agreement whereby the Tsvangirai faction would be allocated 70 percent of seats in seven provinces, and the Mutambara faction would be allocated 70 percent of seats in the three Matabeleland provinces (Matabeleland North and South, and Bulawayo.) Tsvangirai's national council had refused to ratify this agreement, and had instead, according to Mutambara, demanded 50 percent of seats in the three provinces.

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17. (C) Mutambara said he had been flexible in ceding seats in Harare. The Tsvangirai faction had not shown the same flexibility in Matabeleland. While he believed Tsvangirai's heart was in the right place, he had not exhibited leadership and had not imposed discipline on his faction. Continuing to excoriate Tsvangirai, Mutambara said Tsvangirai lacked character, commitment, and judgment.

18. (C) Mutambara stated he would run for president. He admitted that a divided MDC would surely lose the upcoming elections. In the process, Mugabe would gain legitimacy.

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Biti Blames Leadership of Both Factions  
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19. (C) Tendai Biti, in a February 5 conversation with polecon chief, clarified and expanded on the differences between the factions. Biti said he and Mutambara-faction secretary general Welshman Ncube drafted the rejected

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agreement. It provided for the Tsvangirai faction to contest 70 percent of seats in the seven provinces other than Matabeleland and for the Mutambara faction to contest 70 percent of seats in Matabeleland North and South. Each faction would contest the seats it now held. In Bulawayo, the agreement called for the Mutambara faction to maintain its current 11 seats (6 House and 5 Senate) and for the Tsvangirai faction to maintain its one seat. The six newly

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created House and Senate seats would be split evenly for the factions to contest. The Tsvangirai national council rejected this agreement and initially demanded two additional seats, which would have given them a 30 percent allocation in Bulawayo, as in the other two Matabeleland provinces. The Mutambara faction refused to give on this issue. The Tsvangirai national council then upped the ante and demanded

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it be authorized to contest 50 percent of the seats in all three Matabeleland provinces. Biti said, however, that the dispute could have been settled if the Mutambara faction agreed to give up the two Matabeleland seats.

¶10. (C) Biti opined that the Matabeleland members in both MDC factions were "vicious" and intent on imposing themselves to replace the late Joshua Nkomo as the "patriarch" of Matabeleland. He blamed the leadership of both factions--he called both Welshman Ncube and Tsvangirai "fools"--but was particularly critical of his president, Tsvangirai. He termed Tsvangirai a "disaster," and said if Tsvangirai proceeded to the elections as head of a divided party, he would be completely discredited. On the only positive note, Biti thought strong mediation might yet effect a reconciliation.

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COMMENT  
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¶11. (C) Biti, who spent prodigious amounts of time trying to reconcile the two factions, is tired and frustrated, and his criticisms of Tsvangirai may be, at least to an extent, unjustified. Tsvangirai is dealing with a rump faction within his faction, and even a stronger leader might have trouble controlling it. What the failure to reach an agreement clearly reveals, however, is that the MDC (both factions) is continuing to allow personal interests to trump what should be an overriding concern for the country.

¶12. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: The MDC split and possible further efforts at reconciliation may become moot. Mutambara told us today that his faction is considering supporting Simba Makoni and his bid for the presidency (Reftel). END COMMENT.

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